DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 210 999 HE 014 617

AUTHOR Brown, Peggy, Ed.
TITLE Programs for First-Year Students.
INSTITUTION Association of American Colleges, Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE 81
NOTE 17p.
AVAILABLE FROM Association of American Colleges, 1818 R Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20009.
JOURNAL CIT Forum for Liberal Education; v4 n2 Nov/Dec 1981

EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS College Environment; *College Freshmen; College Programs; Higher Education; Interdisciplinary Approach; Interviews; Liberal Arts; School Holding Power; *School Orientation; *Seminars; *Student Adjustment; Student Characteristics; *Student College Relationship; Student Needs; Student Problems; Student Teacher Relationship; Writing Skills
IDENTIFIERS City University of New York Coll of Staten Island; Denison University OH; Saint Olaf College MN; State University of New York Coll at Oswego; University of South Carolina Columbia; Washington University MO

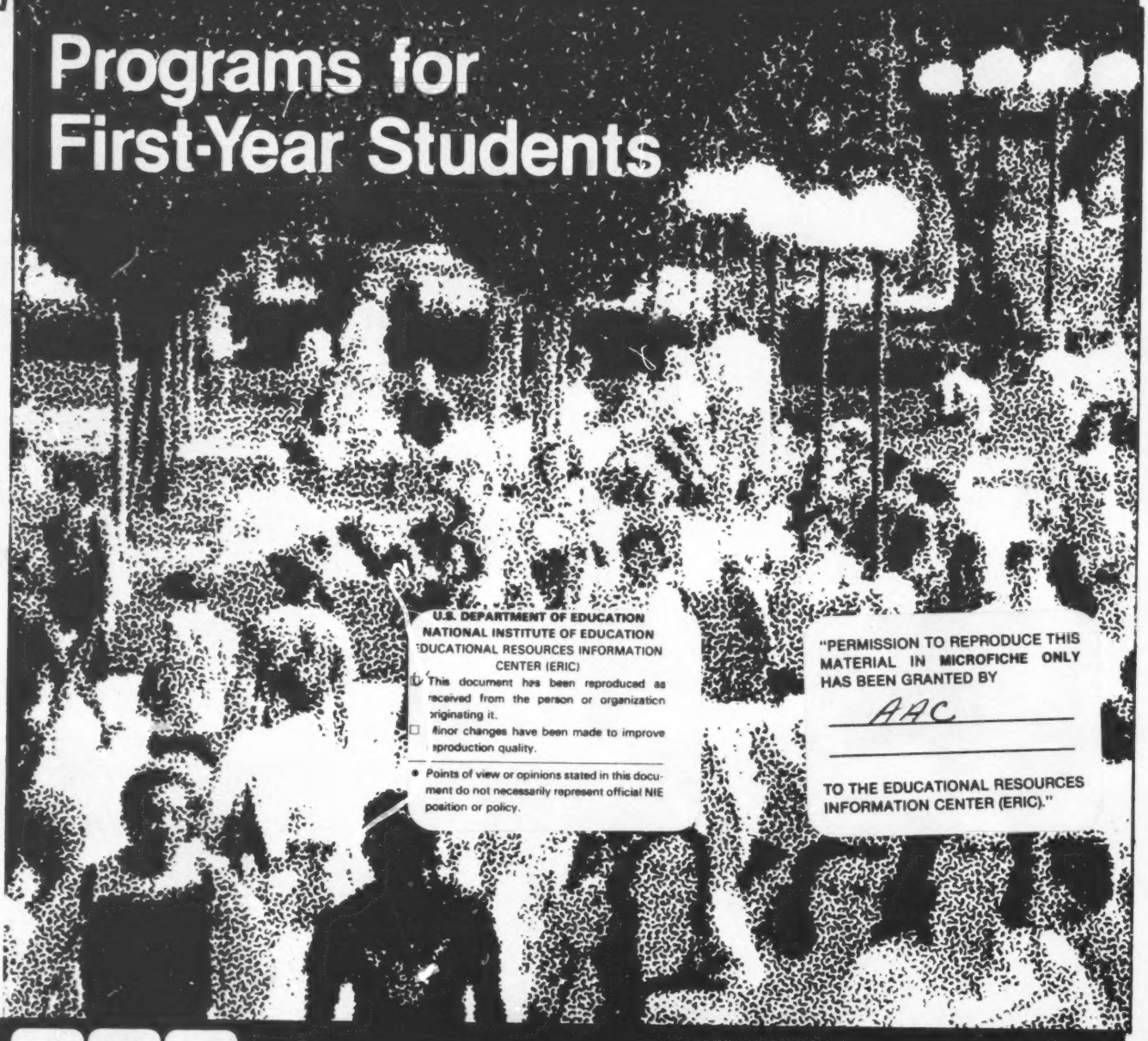
ABSTRACT

An article and descriptions of programs for first-year college students are presented. In "As Freshmen First," John Orr Dwyer recounts the history of the word "freshman" and outlines some of the characteristics of the 1980s first-year student. Recognizing the problems that face students entering college for the first time, he asks why there is no national association for the administrators who help freshmen overcome these problems and adjust to their new academic, social, and physical environments. The program descriptions following the essay illustrate some of the ways in which colleges and universities are helping these first-year students adjust to college life. At the University of South Carolina, Columbia, and the State University of New York College, Oswego, structured orientation programs are provided that aim for increased student awareness of campus facilities, services, and activities. Washington University, and Denison University have designed special courses and seminars that unify freshman academic experiences. The City University of New York, College of Staten Island, offers a freshman seminar, freshman workshop, a baccalaureate program for students ranked in the top third of their graduating class, and a program that integrates the development of writing ability with the teaching of the subject matter. At St. Olaf College, interviews were conducted with freshmen in order to determine how and when programs should be implemented and dilemmas and issues that freshmen are facing. Additionally, programs at the following colleges are described briefly: University of Delaware, University of Hartford, Hollins College, Jefferson Community College, Marymount Manhattan College, and Thomas More College. Resource materials also are identified. (SW)

ED210999

The forum for Liberal Education

Programs for First-Year Students



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November/December 1981
Volume IV, Number 2

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Programs for First-Year Students

As John Orr Dwyer states in the following essay, the typical freshman no longer exists. Not only does the description of first-year students differ from campus to campus, administrators at schools across the country are also discovering that their own freshman classes are quite heterogeneous. Dr. Dwyer conducted a study of the freshman year while he was the 1980-81 AAC National Fellow.

Dr. Dwyer recounts the history of the word "freshman" and outlines some of the characteristics of the 1980s first-year student. Recognizing the problems which face students entering college for the first time, he asks why there is no national association for the administrators who help freshmen overcome these problems and adjust to their new academic, social, and physical environments. Dwyer also urges *Forum* readers to share their experiences and establish such a group.

The articles in this issue explore some of the ways in which colleges and universities are helping these first-year students adjust to college life. Several of the schools, such as the University of South Carolina at Columbia and the State University of New York College at Oswego, provide structured orientation programs which strive for increased student awareness of campus facilities, services, and activities. Others, including Washington University and Denison University, have designed special courses and seminars which unify freshman academic experiences.

As Freshmen First

by John Orr Dwyer
Associate Dean
University of San Francisco

As Freshmen First we came to Yale
Fol de rol de rol rol rol!
Examinations made us pale.
Fol de rol de rol rol rol![1]

The American college freshman, often failing as well as paling at examinations, has only recently become the subject of research and analysis and the beneficiary of a variety of campus-based programs. The word "freshman" first appeared in the English language in 1550, according to the *Chronological English Dictionary*. At that time, it was used to describe a newcomer, a novice, or a "new-hand"; only in the 1590s did the word come to have the specific reference to first-year students in an English university. Two centuries later, freshmen were considered together as members of a class at college, and, indeed, were seen as an important measure of the success of the institution. "The admission of so large a class of Freshmen the last year...is a matter of agreeable surprise," noted one college administrator in 1792. By the 19th century, first-year students were judged to be probationary innocents, playful and mischievous, waiting to be instructed in college ways. In 1842, the *Knickerbocker Magazine* reported that "from time immemorial a playful animosity

has existed between the freshman and sophomore classes." A fictional character in an 1852 novel observed that "Freshmen cannot learn the mysteries of college etiquette in a day."

What Is A Freshman?

By the mid-20th century, the American college freshman could be described in general terms with regard to age (17–19 years), academic achievement in high school (high), family income (above average), race (white), and social class (middle to upper). In the 1980s, we could place no confidence whatsoever in such a description.

The freshman is no longer a member of an exclusive group. Since 1965, the number of first-time students taking courses for credit in all American institutions of higher learning increased by more than 50 percent, from about 1,600,000 to almost 2,500,000. The total peaked at just over 2,500,000 in 1975, and has since leveled off just below that total.

The freshman no longer scores well on national standardized tests. Since 1963, the average Scholastic Aptitude Test score in math has dropped 36 points; in the same 18-year period the average verbal score dropped 55 points. The College Board reported in September 1981 that for the first time scores remained the same from one year to the next (1980 to 1981): 466 on the math test and 424 on the verbal.

The freshman is no longer a "traditional" 17- to 19-year-old. The "first-year student," which might be a more appropriate term, is often older and has probably not come straight to college from high school. Such students include retired adults, women who have raised families and intend to begin or renew a career, and young adults who have interrupted their formal education with periods of military or public service, travel or employment. These students bring a variety of needs to today's college campus.

Student Needs

Some institutions have such a heterogeneous group of first-year students that it is impossible to provide them all with the same first-year experience. Their problems must be addressed separately, for they range from the student who, lacking a number of requirements, needs to take remedial courses, to the well-prepared student who deserves a less structured program with a wider freedom of course selection. This variety of perceived needs results in a variety of institutional responses.

It is clear, too, that the institutions which are devising special programs for freshmen are responding to their own need to combat attrition. "Freshman stasis," a term defined by the *International Dictionary of Education* as "a retarding effect on a freshman of the cultural shock of entering a college or university following the more controlled environment of school or home,"[3] contributes directly to poor academic performance. All recent research confirms that academic performance, measured by the freshman year grade point average, is the single most important factor in attrition. The causes of stasis range from the general to the specific. In *Four Critical Years*, a study of how college affects students, Alexander Astin notes that the influence of college is pervasive, especially for the 18-year-old leaving home for the first time. The freshman is at once deprived of the influence of parents and confronted with relationships that may be based on remarkably different beliefs and backgrounds. Sex, drugs, alcohol, and political activism loom as opportunities or threats, and the student may experience the first real challenge to his or her academic motivation and skills. College, Astin concludes, can change (in the four-year period) values, attitudes, aspirations, beliefs, and behavior.[3]

Research also has revealed a more precise contributing factor to the condition of freshman stasis: the remarkably inaccurate perceptions students have of the college experience before they arrive on campus. A study of freshmen on the campus of Miami University in Ohio showed that those earning a C average or lower during their first college semester identified their own lack of motivation, improper study habits, and inattention to school work as reasons for their poor records. As one student testified, "College was simply not taken seriously. I breezed through high school and came out in the number one position with very little effort."[4] The annual American Council on Education/University of California, Los Angeles/Cooperative Institutional Research Program survey of freshman attitudes confirms that a majority of freshmen believe that high school grading is too easy, and many expect to find the same situation in college.[5] The warnings of administrators go unheeded.

Successful Solutions

There is hope. Recent research has shown that increased contact between students and faculty members improves academic achievement and "also stimulates intellectual activity, refines interpersonal skills, and assists in clarifying personal and career goals."[6] The study identifies the individual professor as an informal agent of socialization, comparable in effectiveness to the student's peers. The professor, especially one whose contacts with the student extend the intellectual content of the curriculum beyond the classroom, influences the student's attitudes, values, and development—often in ways discernible before the end of the freshman year. Clearly, this is not the professor whom W.H. Auden defined as "someone who talks in someone else's sleep."

American colleges are aware of the value of the professor outside the classroom, and many have placed faculty advising at the heart of their programs for freshmen. Not all teachers, to be sure, can perform successfully as advisers, and even those who are most effective cannot be expected to do everything. Such an achievement would involve victory over enemies both bureaucratic (procedures, requirements, insensitive clerical employees, computers) and mundane (letters from home, emotional attachments and estrangements, the weather). But faculty members, properly trained, can undertake "intrusive" advising, and thus have a profound effect upon the freshman's ability to adjust to college life.

In spite of the pre-eminence of the trained and talented professor in any effective program for freshmen, colleges must insist on the cooperation of *all* personnel whose responsibilities touch on the experience of first-year students. Peer advisers, coaches, clerks, counselors, secretaries, deans, and maintenance staff contribute to the decisions students make about the institution. The admission procedure has identified a class of freshmen as capable of doing college work—but we must also ask if the college is capable of keeping them.

The thoughtful programs described in this issue belie the charge that colleges are reactive rather than imaginative in their response to problems. Educators at these institutions have identified the needs of first-year students and have made use of current research and their own experience to build programs which will meet those needs. Now these ideas—and those of others—must be shared. The annual meetings of the American Council on Education, the American Association for Higher Education, the Association of American Colleges, and other higher education associations should include panels on freshman programs as a matter of course. Campus-based administrators holding any title akin to "Dean of Freshmen" should organize, produce a newsletter, and hold meetings. Perhaps the first of these could be a special conference on the needs of freshmen. Who will undertake the task?

Only when such systematic sharing takes place will American educators fulfill their responsibilities to first-year students by performing the task that Ralph Waldo Emerson set for all scholars: "to cheer, to raise, to guide (students) by showing them facts amidst appearances."

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[1]Traditional Yale University College song.
[2]London: Kogan Page, 1977.
[3]Alexander W. Astin, *Four Critical Years* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1977), pp. 5-6.
[4]Derrell Hart and Michael J. Keller, "Self-Reported Reasons for Poor Academic Performance of First-Term Freshmen," *Journal of College Student Personnel*, 21, 6 (November, 1980): 530.
[5]Alexander W. Astin, Margo R. King, and Gerald T. Richardson, *The American Freshman: National Norms for Fall 1980* (Los Angeles: Cooperative Institutional Research Program, 1980), pp. 24, 40, 56, 72, 88, and 104.
[6]Patrick T. Terenzini and Ernest T. Pascarella, "Student-Faculty Relationships and Freshman Year Educational Outcomes: A Further Investigation," *Journal of College Student Personnel*, 21, 6 (November, 1980): 521.

University of South Carolina at Columbia

University 101: The Student in the University

More than 10,000 University of South Carolina at Columbia (USC) freshmen have learned about the university and higher education in a three-credit course titled University 101: The Student in the University. Since the program's inception in 1972, faculty members from all academic and administrative departments have taught the course. With University 101, USC provides freshmen with opportunities to meet a faculty member in a small, personalized class and to explore what it means to be a college student.

"University 101 grew out of the mood and climate of the country in the late 60s and early 70s," says John Gardner, director of University 101. "It was the vision of one man, Thomas F. Jones, who was president of the university from 1962 to 1974." According to Gardner, Jones recognized that demographic trends indicated that USC enrollment would drop dramatically by 1980, and he wanted to establish a good retention program while enrollment was still high.

In addition, according to Gardner, Jones and university administrators had done some soul searching in the aftermath of the 1970 USC student riots that had followed the United States' invasion of Cambodia. The president was disturbed that students could do so much damage to their campus, and concluded that the university had to become more humane and improve student attitudes toward the school and its faculty members. His feelings were confirmed by a Christmas card he received which was signed only with the social security number of a student who felt she had been treated impersonally by the university.

In 1972 a group of faculty members and staff developed a course which they hoped would personalize the university, affect student retention, and promote faculty development. USC offered the course on an experimental basis in 1972. The next year University 101 became a permanent course.

During summer orientation, Gardner invites incoming freshmen to enroll in University 101. He tells students that the course is one way to make the university more friendly, to meet 20 other freshmen, and to get to know a professor. Approximately 30 percent of each freshman class enrolls in the elective course. In fall 1981, 836 students are enrolled in 43 sections of University 101.

Course Content

Each of these students are learning about the resources and services of the university, developing positive attitudes toward professors, exploring his or her potential role at USC, and examining higher education. However, the methods for reaching these objectives differ with each instructor.

"We do not standardize the course," says Gardner. "Instructors can use their own unique professions, skills, and interests to involve students as long as they teach their students how to cope with higher education."

For example, one instructor, a statistician and researcher, teaches his students how to ask questions. Gardner is interested in how organizations are designed and shows his classes how to adapt to the university environment.

While there is great variety in how each instructor presents the materials, there also are some common experiences. Early in the semester, the instructors use group trust-building exercises to increase cohesiveness among their students. The professors also begin the course by asking their students what they would like to learn. Most of the instructors, according to Gardner, have required course activities in addition to those chosen by the students. For some professors these include vocational interest testing, career planning, and self-hypnosis instruction as a relaxation technique for test-taking.

Other experiences shared by University 101 students are field trips to campus facilities and points of interest in Columbia, introductions to their professors' own disciplines, values clarification exercises, and attendance at campus events and programs. All of these activities, says Gardner, are designed to help students develop more positive attitudes about education and educators, to reduce the normal anxiety that learners bring to new learning situations, and to provide the atmosphere and freedom for personal interaction between faculty members and students. According to Gardner, many USC students are first generation college students who do not know what to expect from college and

are native South Carolinians who do not feel comfortable with someone who is not from South Carolina.

One activity that some University 101 instructors have found successful for opening up communication between themselves and their students is to require papers written in the form of letters and memorandums. In their papers, students share problems and experiences they have encountered on campus and explain how these were or were not resolved. The letters provide the instructors with the personalized information they need to understand their students and opportunities to offer assistance through written comments that are not shared with the class. Gardner believes the letters are successful because the students enjoy writing about themselves and because the letters and memorandums are closer in format to what the students will be writing after they graduate.

Faculty Training

University 101's flexibility allows the instructors' creativity and academic freedom to flourish, says Gardner. However, the instructors are required to document their methods and must participate in a 40-hour training workshop before teaching the course.

The training workshop is divided into four phases. In the first phase the trainees and workshop leaders participate in trust-building exercises in order to establish a cohesive group. These exercises include sharing activities and disclosing reasons for entering higher education and University 101 training. During the second phase the participants identify the learning objectives for the workshop. "Usually," says Gardner, "these objectives include learning additional teaching skills, learning more about freshman student needs, and discovering campus and community resources available to help students."

The third phase of the workshop is designed to meet these objectives by introducing staff members from various campus service offices. The staff members share information about the resources available from their offices, such as career counseling, assertiveness training and study skills assistance. In the final phase the trainees meet with experienced University 101 instructors to discuss problems and experiences. During the semester, these discussions continue at University 101 faculty luncheon meetings.

The workshop introduces faculty members to some of the same techniques which are used in the University 101 classroom, such as trust-building exercises and facilitation. "Facilitation," says Gardner, "is a process whereby students learn from experiences and activities structured by the professor. In the traditional classroom the professor is assumed to have most of the answers. By contrast, in the facilitative process the students must find their own answers. The faculty member *facilitates* the process of students discovering their own answers."

Each year approximately 65 faculty members participate in University 101 training. "They volunteer for different reasons," says Gardner. "University 101 and the training workshop provide an opportunity to learn about the university's resources, meet new people, acquire new teaching methods, and interact with freshmen. A number of people enroll in the workshop without teaching the course."

Student Retention

In addition to providing faculty development exercises and student orientation experiences, University 101 also affects student retention rates. Between 1973 and 1979, an average of 80 percent of the University 101 participants returned to USC for their sophomore year, while 74.9 percent of the non-participants returned. Notes Gardner: "When University 101 students have lower academic ability as a group, they are still able to survive at a rate equal to or greater than the more academically qualified students who did not take University 101."

Students who enroll in University 101 also are more likely to know about university services and to use them. For example, a 1978 survey indicated that 66.1 percent of University 101 students were aware of the Communication Skills Development Center compared to 43.3 percent of the non-participants, and that 30.2 percent of the University 101 students had used this service compared to 11.7 percent of the non-participants. University 101 students also participated in more campus acitvities such as student government, the university cultural series, and residence hall programs.

Gardner and USC administrators are pleased with the success of University 101. The program has been replicated at 21 colleges and universities in the United States and Canada. In addition, USC has developed special sections of the course for handicapped students, commuting students, and freshmen over age 25.

"University 101 stresses survival skills," says Gardner. "We provide students with a knowledge of the system and how to be successful in it." *P.B.*

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Washington University

FOCUS for Freshmen

When administrators of Washington University's College of Arts and Sciences began to design a freshman program option for their students interested in liberal arts, they looked at components of their pre-medical program in which 50 percent of their freshmen initially enroll. The college's pre-medical program provides its freshmen with a structured, topical academic framework; frequent contact with academic advisers; and an intellectual camaraderie with other pre-medical students. These positive aspects of the pre-medical program prompted the college's administrators to develop a program called FOCUS, now in its eighth year.

As its title suggests, the FOCUS program gives freshmen in the College of Arts and Sciences an opportunity to focus their liberal arts studies on a particular interdisciplinary theme. Approximately 100–125 of the college's 700 freshmen register for a FOCUS section, which each admit a maximum of 15 students on a first-come, first-served basis. These FOCUS freshmen study their chosen theme in a small, informal core seminar and in several complementary general education courses. The general education

courses provide students with a shared educational background that enhances and often forms the bases for discussions in the core seminar.

Each core seminar gives students a chance to discuss their FOCUS topic and shared courses with each other and their seminar professor. Because FOCUS professors also act as academic advisers to their students, FOCUS freshmen can maintain close contact with an adviser who knows their classwork.

They also maintain close contact with other FOCUS students. The FOCUS program fosters such contact as one of its goals, according to Max J. Okenfuss, professor of history and director of FOCUS. Because of the FOCUS program, says Okenfuss, freshmen in the College of Arts and Sciences can now reap the intellectual benefits of frequent extracurricular discussions with their classmates, almost constant contact with their academic advisers, and an interdisciplinary approach to one "intellectual package."

An Informal but Rigorous Approach

Topics of the FOCUS sections vary slightly from year to year, because faculty members design the seminars and adjacent general education curriculum according to their own specialities and interests. FOCUS professors develop the seminar topics at the request of Okenfuss, who says he usually asks faculty members who have recieved high student evaluations of their teaching and who seem to have a good rapport with freshmen to participate in the program.

A good rapport between FOCUS professors and their students is important, says Okenfuss, because the success of the FOCUS program partly depends on the creation of a relaxed atmosphere in the seminars. To encourage such an atmosphere, some faculty members teach the seminars in their homes or in campus lounges. In an informal setting, the professors and students can feel free to digress from the FOCUS topic into other areas that interest them. For example, Okenfuss devoted one seminar session to a discussion of study methods for history tests.

Topics and Requirements

FOCUS courses award elective credit but do not always fulfill the college's distribution requirements. Consequently, each FOCUS area must require students to take at least one semester of English composition. FOCUS students, however, use their English composition course as a workshop in which to write essays about their FOCUS topic.

The five FOCUS topics offered this year are Comparative Arts, Conflict and Society, Law and Society, Search for Values, and Women Emerging. Comparative Arts examines and compares art forms such as literature, music, and painting. The first semester of the program concentrates on 19th century art, while the second semester concentrates on the 20th century and examines new art forms such as modern dance and film. As a supplement to their academic study of art, students must do creative work in music, dance, fine arts, drama, or writing. The Comparative Arts program also requires students to take the college's western civilization course and encourages them to study a foreign language.

Conflict and Society asks students to consider what humanists can tell them about the nature of conflict and violence. In the core seminar, students discuss questions about the reasons for violence between individuals and nations, the possibility of beneficial effects of violence, and whether western civilization has a uniquely assertive predilection for conflict and violence. They also discuss Rousseau's, Freud's, and Marx's theories of alienation; the past and present conflict between Islam and Christianity; the views of Tolstoi and Solzhenitsyn toward Russia and the West; and traditional and modern social controls on aggression. Students in this program develop a shared educational background by taking one literature survey and one western history survey course in addition to the core seminar.

The seminar for the Law and Society program examines the assumptions, goals, historical patterns, and social effects of law. Students in this program do not learn the technical details of law; instead, they ask what law is, and how well it works in different social structures. In the fall, this FOCUS seminar concentrates on the social and moral bases of legal institutions, the affect of the changing distinctions between "public" and "private" concerns on law enforcement, and the public's perception of these issues. In the spring, students discuss the relationship between law and morality, the effect of coercive legislation on individual liberty, and the arguments for and against the legal enforcement of morality. Although Law and Society students take two other courses related to the study of law, the program is not a "pre-law"offering.

The Search for Values seminar explores the historical and contemporary role of values in theoretical and practical terms. In the fall, required reading includes portions of the Bible, and various works of Plato, Homer, Virgil, Dante, Machiavelli and Shakespeare. In the spring, students read selections from Camus, Melville, Dostoevsky, and Ralph Ellison. Throughout the year, students also take Western Civilization, Oriental Philosophy, and a special section of Introduction to Art.

For students interested in the historical and contemporary roles of women, the Women Emerging seminar examines how contemporary feminism has changed the lives of many women in western societies; how race, class, and culture affect women; how the subordination of women began; and how institutions can be changed to allow people equal opportunity and autonomy. In the fall, Women Emerging students also take a course on women and literature and a course on women and the visual arts. In the spring, Women Emerging includes a course on the Psychology of Women.

Past and Future Programs

Some of these FOCUS programs, such as Comparative Arts, Law and Society, and Search for Values, remain in the freshman curriculum almost constantly. Other programs have been offered sporadically. These include Tradition and Change, which focused on the history and literature of Germany; Quantitative Methods and Social Sciences, which gave students a background in social sciences, statistics, and computers; Coming of Age in America, which explored formal rites of passage in various cultures and, through the perspectives of the humanities and social sciences, studied adolescents' psychological development; Third World Perspectives, which studied Asian, Islamic, and Latin American cultures; Biological Bases of Behavior, which examined behavior by studying sociobiology, biology, and psychology; and Business and

Society, which approached the study of business the way Law and Society approached the study of law.

A new FOCUS program may be offered soon, says Okenfuss. He and the college administration have tentative plans to develop a program called Technology and the Liberal Arts. The program would explore the role of technology in society and in the study of liberal arts. According to Okenfuss, such a program would complement other plans of the college administration, which has recently received Sloan Foundation support for efforts to build a cooperative academic relationship between the Engineering School and the College of Arts and Sciences. The college has also received a Joyce Foundation grant for further curriculum development. Okenfuss anticipates that this support will generate some other FOCUS program ideas.

Success of FOCUS

The current FOCUS programs receive compliments and respect from students and faculty members, says Okenfuss. He adds that FOCUS students seem to get involved in extracurricular activities more readily than other freshmen. One extracurricular activity, a general assembly evening program open only to FOCUS students, invites participants to hear bi-annual presentations on community issues. Last year, Tad Foot, former dean of Washington University Law School and now president of the University of Miami, discussed desegregation in St. Louis public schools. At the time, Foot headed the principal citizens advising committee on desegregation. This year, Harry Jones, professor emeritus of jurisprudence at Columbia University spoke on "Can Legislation be Scientific?"

Events such as these involve freshmen in their community and ask them to use their coursework to think about specific issues, says Okenfuss. He expresses pride in the FOCUS program, and believes FOCUS freshmen can approach their college years with direction and enthusiasm.

K.M.

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City University of New York College of Staten Island

First-Year Programs

Acknowledging that the preparation of their entering students varies greatly, administrators at the City University of New York College of Staten Island are designing programs aimed at providing freshmen with experiences suited to their skills levels. Already in place are the Freshman Seminar and Baccalaureate Programs. The Freshman Workshop is being implemented this fall, and the Writing Across the Curriculum Program is in the planning stages.

Placement in these programs is based, in part, on a freshman's scores in the writing, reading, and mathematics skills assessment examinations required of all students admitted to any branch of the City University of New York (CUNY). Administrators also are interested in a student's high school average and class standing.

Freshman Seminar

With a grant from the U.S. Department of Education's Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE), the college designed and implemented the Freshman Seminar Program in fall 1978. This program was developed for students who had passed the CUNY reading examination but had failed the writing examination. Roger Moorhus, associate dean of the faculty, observes that the college's experience has shown that these students are in a better position to begin college-level work than those who do not pass either the reading or writing examinations.

In the Freshman Seminar Program students enroll in a remedial writing course and a disciplinary seminar. The courses are "block programmed" so that the 25 students enrolled in each section of the writing course will also be scheduled for the same seminar. The college also tries to schedule each writing class/seminar block in back-to-back time slots.

Freshman seminar instructors volunteer for the program and agree to work with the other faculty member teaching their block. The instructors do not receive any special training for the course, although they meet as a group to discuss common problems. The coordination of the two courses in each block is left to the instructors, according to David Nasaw, director of the FIPSE project and associate professor of history.

The amount of coordination varies. For example, an instructor teaching a history seminar on family history combined the seminar with the writing course and team-taught, with the writing instructor, a six-hour class. "There was really no separation between these two courses, says Nasaw. "Assignments were given together." The freshmen examined the history of the family and the changing roles of parents and women. Assignments included interviewing older family members and writing sketches about family relationships and culminated with an autobiographical report spanning three generations.

In a freshman seminar in biology, the instructor worked closely with the writing instructor but did not combine the two courses. Seminar students observed animal behavior and described what they saw. Their English composition course also centered on written descriptions. The students wrote about human behavior and investigated the necessity for precision in descriptive materials. In some writing class/seminar blocks the instructors do not coordinate assignments, says Nasaw. Instead, they meet periodically to discuss the progress and problems of students in their classes.

Seminar Success

In seminar evaluations, Nasaw discovered that no matter what the instructors did or did not do as a team, the freshmen benefited from block programming. "Students told us that they got a lot out of sharing two teachers, two classes, and two assignments," says Nasaw. "Students need to form a supportive community."

The Freshman Seminar Program also has a positive effect on attrition. In the 1979–80 academic year, 90 percent

of the students enrolled in freshman seminars returned for their second semester compared to 66 percent of all liberal arts students with 16 credits or less. Nasaw believes that the differences in attrition are due to the realization by seminar students that they had friends who cared about their progress.

Baccalaureate Program

College of Staten Island administrators designed the Baccalaureate Program for those students who have earned high school averages of 80 or above, ranked in the top third of their graduating class, or earned a 3.0 average in their college classes. According to Nasaw, the Baccalaureate Program was created after the 1977 merger of the Staten Island Community College and the Richmond College, which had previously served third- and fourth-year students. Baccalaureate Program courses are similar to honors courses, says Nasaw. Students enroll in baccalaureate sections of their English courses and of several of their distribution requirement courses.

Approximately ten percent of each entering freshman class qualifies for the Baccalaureate Program. Associate Dean Moorhus comments: "This program allows the better prepared student considerable freedom of selection but also provides the advantages of common experiences with students of equal preparation and some greater academic challenge in the first year."

Freshman Workshop

While the Baccalaureate Program was designed for those students who are ready for the challenges of post-secondary education, the Freshman Workshop Project was created for those students who fail all three of the CUNY skills assessment examinations. These students are scheduled for three-course blocks composed of remedial writing, remedial reading, and a freshman workshop. Although it is not part of the block of courses, workshop students also enroll in remedial mathematics.

The freshman workshop is similar to the seminar in that the subject matter is also drawn from the instructor's discipline. Implemented for the first time in fall 1981, the program offers students three disciplinary focuses: social science, business, and science. The science workshop, for example, is being taught by a physicist who is helping his students learn about the function of questions. Freshmen in his workshop learn how calculators work and visit the college's computer room. In the remedial writing and reading classes blocked with the science workshop, the students expand their skills in questioning by formulating as many questions as possible on such things as sentences, a piece of machinery, and a guitar. Freshmen in the business workshop are improving their reading and writing skills by learning how to establish a new business.

"The courses are not what students expect," says Rose Ortiz, director of the Freshman Workshop Project and assistant professor in the Department of English, Speech, and World Literature. "They are beginning to appreciate and trust what is being said in the classroom and are asking questions. They are supportive of each other."

Ortiz notes that the Freshman Workshop Project also has increased the communication between faculty members. The project instructors met during the spring 1981 semester for three hours a week for 15 weeks to learn about the reading process and how to teach a disciplinary course as a reading class. The faculty seminar was taught by campus remediation specialists.

"The participants engaged in the reading process as students," says Ortiz. "They analyzed what they do as readers and were able to observe teaching techniques which they could bring to the workshop classes." Adds Nasaw: "The training seminars also acquainted the faculty members with the problems and potentials of students who cannot read but who have gotten this far in the educational system."

Writing Across the Curriculum

The fourth component of the college's first-year programs is the Writing Across the Curriculum Program. Students who do not qualify for the baccalaureate course section but who do pass their reading and writing examinations will benefit from this program. In this approach, faculty members offering 100-level courses will integrate the development of writing ability with the teaching of the subject matter in their disciplines. The college will sponsor a training seminar for these instructors during the spring 1982 semester.

"I am totally convinced that we must have all faculty do something about our students' writing," says Nasaw. "If you only emphasize writing in one course, students cannot achieve competence. This problem must be confronted by the entire faculty. We cannot isolate it in the English Department or the remedial courses."

In examining the various programs for first-year students, Nasaw says that some of the major beneficiaries are faculty members. "They now realize that problems are not insurmountable," says Nasaw. "They see how the various strategies work with different students.

"You cannot divide the world into college students and non-college students. You must diagnose your students' deficiencies and set up special programs." Nasaw stresses that these programs cannot consist merely of remedial courses for students with skills deficiencies. "Working with students on their problems in an academic vacuum does not help students," he says. "They are discouraged when their reading and writing are separate from other courses. You cannot look at these students as skills-deficient and give them watered down versions of college courses. You must give them work that builds up their skills and is intellectually stimulating.

"We tell our students what their problems are. They can enter these programs and take care of the problems. Our candor gets the students off in the right direction." *P.B.*

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Denison University

Experiments in Freshman Studies

As part of its effort to restore a cohesive structure to Denison University's general education requirements, the college's general education committee in summer 1979 charged a subcommittee with the study and development of freshman programs. The subcommittee, consisting of one member of the general education committee and four faculty members not on the committee, assessed the needs of Denison freshmen and used the assessment to delineate its objectives in planning a freshman program.

The general objective of designing courses exclusively for freshmen grew from the subcommittee's realization that freshmen need courses that develop a shared base of knowledge and experience among the students. According to the subcommittee, freshman courses should do this by addressing the special needs of first-year students who have not yet declared a major and by stressing the importance of an organized format of general education courses.

Freshman Studies Objectives

From this belief that freshmen need more than an unorganized sampling of general education courses came the subcommittee's objective of creating interdisciplinary courses. The subcommittee claimed that the college should expose students to interdisciplinary study in their first year in order to give freshmen an early opportunity to find intellectual connections between disciplines and their other general education courses.

This emphasis on the need for interdisciplinary freshman courses appeared in other objectives set by the subcommittee. One such objective is the integration of fine arts into the freshman curriculum. Although Denison has a fine arts program, the subcommittee noted that freshmen generally seem uninvolved in the college's fine arts activities.

Freshmen also need an exposure to pertinent value issues in their courses, according to the subcommittee. Although the college has always offered religion and philosophy courses, the subcommittee argued that freshmen need to explore the often latent values and premises inherent in every discipline. The subcommittee also suggested that the freshman program should stress the importance of classical works and require as much writing as possible from the students.

Program Design

To meet these objectives, the subcommittee obtained funds from the National Endowment for the Humanities, appointed a director of freshman studies, designated a campus dormitory as a residence for freshman studies students, and designed the structural outlines of three experimental freshman studies courses.

The college offered these courses in 1979–80 and will continue to offer them on an experimental basis until spring 1982. College administrators and faculty members then will decide what types of courses would constitute the best program of required freshman studies. Currently, freshmen enroll in the special freshman studies courses in the same way they enroll in any general education elective, although the director of freshman studies recommends that they take all three of the courses in one year. Once a student has enrolled in a freshman studies course, he or she may live in the dormitory reserved for freshman studies students.

Course Structure

Each of the three current freshman studies courses meets at least one of the subcommittee's stated objectives. Freshman Studies (FS) 101 focuses on the improvement of students' reading and writing skills by covering various classical and contemporary works. FS 102 introduces freshmen to basic aesthetic concepts and asks them to consider the contribution the arts make to them and to their culture. This course uses the cultural events of the Denison fine arts community as major topics of discussion. The third interdisciplinary course, FS 103, examines methods of scientific thought and the relationship between science and disciplines such as economics, ethics, and social sciences. All three courses incorporate the classics when possible and demand frequent writing assignments from students.

Course Content

Although the subcommittee determined the original experimental structure and foci of the three courses, the faculty members who teach them determine the course content. David Woodyard, director of freshman studies, says that he usually tries to find "interesting and complementary combinations" of faculty to team-teach and organize the courses. Consequently, the content of the courses varies each semester.

For example, a fall 1980 section of FS 101, Achieving Selfhood in a Patriarchal Society, examined classical and contemporary literature, while a Fall 1981 section, Words and Ideas: An Introduction to the Humanities, used literature to study World War I, late 19th Century Vienna, Rome in the first century A.D., and Renaissance England. The content of FS 102 depends to an extent on the arts offerings at Denison. A Fall 1981 section of the course, Music, the Arts and Civilization, concentrated mainly on music, while a Fall 1980 section, Aesthetics, Culture and Criticism: The World of the Artist, examined the nature of the creative process and forms of music, dance, theatre, film, painting and architecture. FS 103 changes in accordance with the specialties of the teachers. Each section covers the nature of scientific inquiry, but one course concentrates on computer technology, ethics, and international economics; one focuses on evolutionary theory, sociobiology and cultural materialism, and one uses scientific methods to study energy, food resources, population, and nuclear war. The variety of approaches to the freshman studies courses will eventually help college administrators and faculty members decide what kind of courses both challenge and help freshmen, says Woodyard.

Program Response

To facilitate these program decisions, Woodyard has been collecting written evaluations of each course from students, the teachers, and outside faculty members who spoke with students in order to gauge their reactions. Although reaction to individual courses differed, most students enjoyed and benefited from sharing a residence hall with other freshman studies students. Evidently, says Woodyard, the emphasis on shared experience should stay in the program. These subjective evaluations will be sup-

plemented eventually by an objective, or quantitative kind of evaluation that freshman studies administrators are still working on.

Meanwhile, Woodyard claims that the current freshman studies program has provided a good base of "experiments" that will help college curriculum planners clarify their thinking about freshman studies and its role in the general education curriculum. For this reason, Woodyard calls the program a success. *K.M.*

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St. Olaf College

Freshman Portrait

Recognizing that it is valuable for student service professionals and faculty members to understand what it is like to be a freshman at St. Olaf College, Bruce Roberts, dean of men, conducted a year-long study of how six students were adapting to the campus environment. Roberts, an associate professor of psychology, applied the principles of social ecology and community psychology to his study of the freshman year at St. Olaf.

Social ecology research focuses on the relationships between individuals and their social and physical environments and centers on the types of support that people give to one another. Community psychologists examine the different types of social interactions and developmental changes which occur in a community and when and where these occur. Roberts believes that it is important for a school to examine its own unique environment and community before applying such development models as those provided by William Perry, E. Erickson, and Jean Piaget to its student services work.

"An understanding of the natural environment with which one is working is an important though often missing ingredient when developing plans and programs which affect the lives of others," says Roberts. "We focus on the naturally occuring social ecological environment—the way people actually live at any given point in time, the relationships and issues that they see as important, and the activities that they choose."

Freshman Interviews

Roberts decided that while the results of such national studies as Alexander Astin's *The American Freshman: National Norms* are important in providing a baseline of dominant campus attitudes and behaviors, they could not give specifics on what St. Olaf freshmen were thinking. To gather this type of information he needed to conduct a social ecological study of the St. Olaf environment.

Roberts randomly selected four freshman males and two freshman females from a freshman coeducational residence hall to participate in the year-long study. Beginning with the first week of the first semester, researchers met with each participant once a week for 30–45 minutes and asked each a series of seven questions. At each interview students were asked, "What has been the most important thing that has happened this past week for you?" and "How do you think you've changed in this last week?" Additional questions were related to answers from the previous week or campus events such as breaks and homecoming. At the end of the year Roberts and staff member Gary Johnson compiled the results of the interviews and asked ten more randomly selected freshmen to comment on the findings. After meeting with the second group of freshmen Roberts adjusted the compiled materials according to their suggestions.

The results of the freshman interviews provided Roberts with data that is important in determining how and when programs should be implemented at St. Olaf. For example, he discovered that by the end of the third week of the first semester the students had established their daily routines, including study habits and extracurricular activities. These findings helped Roberts' staff recognize the importance of encouraging freshmen to become invoived in activities within the first few weeks of the school year.

Interview Findings

Roberts discovered that some of the students' responses matched those identified by national studies. For example, St. Olaf freshmen had difficulty with study skills and felt homesick. However, Roberts did uncover some unexpected attitudes. These included the students' commitment to a religious belief system and the range of that commitment and their strong ties to their families.

"The study points out the importance of letters from home," says Roberts. "I tell parents that their letters are important even though their offspring may appear somewhat blasé about whether or not they wish to hear that 'Daisy,' the family dog, is feeling better. Perhaps this is simply restating the obvious for parents. On the other hand, it may encourage their writing even in the face of apparent indifference on the part of their son or daughter."

Roberts also learned about the importance of faculty-student contacts in maintaining the freshman's feelings of satisfaction and well-being. As a result, faculty members now play a more significant role during freshman orientation, and administrators host departmental open houses so that students can meet faculty members from various departments.

According to Roberts, the freshman portrait also has helped him in his personal contacts with students. "I draw on the results of the portrait as a means of communicating to students that I am aware of the dilemmas and issues they are facing, and the events that are affecting their lives. To be seen by students as 'knowing the campus' in this manner is helpful. It increases the likelihood that the rest of what I have to say will be seen as accurate as well."

Recommendations

Roberts and Johnson shared the results of the freshman study with faculty members, staff, and administrators. Roberts thought it would be useful, for example, for the career planning office to know that freshmen do not think about jobs and careers during their first semester but do begin expressing interest in career planning during the fourth and fifth weeks of the second semester.

Roberts encourages anyone interested in designing a similar study to first establish a broad base of support from a variety of administrative and department offices. With this support, he says, there will be more commitment to using the findings of the study in program planning.

In addition, Roberts suggests that schools compile a freshman portrait every four years. "The campus climate changes," he says, "and the important nodes in time vary. These will alter personal aspirations or activities and affect the resulting portrait."

Roberts conducted the St. Olaf freshman study during the 1975–76 academic year. His office does not have the funds to compile another freshman portrait, although he hopes to find someone with a professional interest in social ecology research to conduct a new study.

"The findings can be used as a guide for when and how to intervene with specific developmental theories," says Roberts. "The time is right for schools to examine the environment in which their students live, work, and play."

P.B.

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State University of New York College at Oswego

The Third Curriculum and the Mentoring Project

Once nicknamed "The Friendly College By the Lake," the State University of New York College at Oswego (SUNY–Oswego) continues to strive for an atmosphere in which students know they are part of a campus community. The Division of Student Services offers entering freshmen an opportunity to learn about the college through its summer orientation program presented at 12 locations throughout New York State.

"Our Third Curriculum Road Show sets the tone for the college," says I. David Glick, vice president for student services and dean of students. "It tells a student, 'you are going to an institution where you will be an important person and where you will not get lost in the shuffle.'"

The Third Curriculum is the title given by SUNY–Oswego to the on-going orientation process that students participate in during their freshman year. The first curriculum is academics, and the second curriculum is social and cultural activities.

Road Show

For the past 13 years, the Third Curriculum Program has invited incoming freshmen and their parents to a one-day summer orientation session near their homes. The orientation, called the Third Curriculum Road Show, uses the facilities of SUNY schools across the state.

At the orientation, the students meet with a trained team of faculty members, students, and student personnel professionals. Each year a selection committee interviews and chooses six faculty members and two upper division students to participate in the program. In addition, the assistant dean for orientation travels with the team. Glick says the orientations provide the faculty members with professional in-service development opportunities and a more realistic view of students and their parents.

More than 85 percent of the new students attend the orientation sessions. They begin the one-day orientation with English and mathematics competency tests while their parents listen to a presentation on residence hall life by the student team members. During the day faculty members advise the incoming freshmen and help them register for fall semester classes. The new students review the student handbook, have their identification photographs taken, and learn about campus life. The program strives for an intimate, seminar-like atmosphere with no more than ten students per adviser in the discussion groups. The team limits the number of freshmen participating each day to approximately 100 students.

Slide Show

A highlight of the orientation is the student-prepared triple projection slide show. With recorded music by such folk rock musicians as Cat Stevens, the students and their parents view a choreographed portrait of life at SUNY–Oswego. The show includes pictures of classrooms, residence halls, local scenery, sporting events, and social activities.

"The slide show captures the spirit of Oswego," says Glick. "Oswego is not just classrooms and programs. It is the beautiful sunsets over Lake Ontario and the spectacular snowfalls. At the end of the show the audience always cheers and applauds."

The students and parents also are enthusiastic about the rest of the road show. Students' comments include such remarks as "extremely helpful" and "I feel like I am part of something important." Glick feels the real testimony of the program's success comes from the parents. "They have never seen anything like it," he says. "It is just like a traveling tent show. The program comes to them and saves them time and money."

In addition to the road show, the Third Curriculum Program also coordinates the fall and midyear phase activities, the transfer program, and the local off-campus organization. The Committee for Fall and Midyear Phase plans orientation activities for students new to the campus in September and January. The staff also meets on a one-to-one basis with freshmen to check on academic progress, assist in finding part-time jobs, and ask how they are adjusting to college life. The staff makes a special effort to insure that the new students are aware of activities, such as films and lectures, on campus.

The transfer program conducts an on-campus orientation for transfer students. The local off-campus organization works to keep the 2,400 students living off campus involved in the SUNY–Oswego community. It provides a special lounge for these students in the college union and sponsors orientation dinners.

Mentoring Project

The Student Advisement Center is another program

under the SUNY–Oswego Division of Student Services. One of its major functions is the advisement of students who have not yet declared majors. Several years ago the academic and student services divisions noted that the attrition rate for these students was 11 percent per semester. The divisions examined the problem and realized if students did not have an adviser in an academic division they might not see any adviser. In 1978 the advisement center ran a pilot Mentoring Project with 160 freshmen who had not chosen a major. Each of the freshmen met with an adviser four times during the semester. The staff discovered that the attrition rate for these undeclared students dropped to three percent per semester when they received the intrusive advising.

Today 150 freshmen and sophomores participate in the Mentoring Project. Sixty people, including student personnel staff and faculty members, advise the students. Faculty members, who are assigned approximately five advisees, receive training in the needs of these students, the necessity for continuous contact, and the procedures for choosing and scheduling classes.

"A mentor is a close confidant," says Glick. "We discovered that these students need that type of person the first time away from home. The mentors provide the students with every reasonable assistance to make them successful here."

Mentors talk with their students about subjects ranging from classes and roommates to friends and sports. Glick recalls how one student, who had played trumpet in her high school band, was about to leave Oswego. He urged her to find out about the school's jazz ensemble, and believes her eventual membership in that group made the difference in keeping her at the college. "The mentors," he says, "get to know each student personally. They look at their avocational, as well as their academic, interests."

In a recent survey of more than 95 percent of the students who left Oswego before graduating, the Division of Student Services learned that there were five major reasons for leaving the school. The reasons were to attend a school closer to the student's home, to go to work because college was not what he or she wanted to do, to enroll in a junior college program leading to a technical degree, to pursue a degree program not available at Oswego, and to avoid the harsh winter weather. "We work hard to recruit our students," says Glick, "and we hate to lose them. We cannot change the weather but with our Mentoring Project we do not lose them for neglect anymore."

Combined Talents

Glick is proud of the accomplishments of the Division of Student Services. Recent evaulations of the division and the Student Advisement Center indicate that the students are satisfied with the personal contacts they have with staff and faculty members. A few years ago the division changed its name from student affairs to student services. "It was a small change with a big effect," says Glick. "The name change made a phenomenal difference in how the students and faculty members viewed our programs. We were no longer the office which worked with students in trouble."

Glick also is pleased by the way in which his staff represents the school. "We receive high grades from students on being empathetic," he says. "We are a big school with the amenities of smaller schools."

According to Glick, the president's support is also important to their efforts in helping students adjust to SUNY–Oswego. Merit money is awarded to faculty members who participate in advising, and teaching and student services are ranked above research in importance.

Glick also believes that his programs are successful because of the combined talents of his staff with those of staff in the divisions of arts and sciences and professional studies. For example, while each division has its own staff and budget, they have all contributed funds for hiring a basketball coach, carpeting the library, and printing the student handbook.

"We are partners in a large enterprise," says Glick. "Whatever we do, we do it well. Student services does not stand over on the side. We work hand in pocket with the academic divisions. This is the best way to get things done." *P.B.*

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Additional Programs

University of Delaware, Newark, DE 10711

Freshman Honors—Six years ago, the University of Delaware began offering academically exceptional high school juniors an opportunity to enroll with freshman status in an early admission, off-campus honors program. This program grew into a campus-based university-wide honors program with a structured freshman-year component. Currently, the honors program enrolls approximately 250 freshmen who had outstanding high school records and who completed the special application to the honors program. As freshmen, honors students must live in designated honors residence halls that encourage a sense of community. One of these residence halls houses the Honors Center, which sponsors films, lectures, exhibits, and student trips. Many honors courses meet at the Center, which also provides a small reference library, study carrells, and four PLATO® computer terminals. The Honors Center helps provide students with what Gary Craig, assistant director of the Honors Program, calls "a state school's alternative to the sense of community often found at a private institution." In addition to extracurricular activities, the honors program offers freshmen a structured program of study, taught by approximately 40 faculty members who also act as academic advisers to honors students. Freshman honors students must take at least nine credits of disciplinary honors courses, which are usually limited to 15 students; one interdisciplinary, team-taught honors colloquium; and a one credit, pass/fail course that requires attendance at the Honors Forum Lecture Series. The lecture series offers films, performances, and presentations related to a broad theme. For example, the 1979 series focused on "1920–1940: Emphasis on an Era" and included a variety of speakers such as author Tillie Olsen, poet Archibald MacLeish, Pulitzer-prize winner Arthur Schlesinger Jr., and musician Aaron Copeland. This year's series focuses on "Conservatism," and lecturers include political figures such as Gloria Steinem, George McGovern, and Michael Harrington. The Honors Forum Lecture Series is open to the entire university, but required of freshman honors students. Freshmen who wish to continue in the honors program and receive an honors degree must maintain a 3.0 grade point average. Most freshmen respond positively to the program, says Craig. He explains that the honors program awards approximately ten four-year merit scholarships, which, along with student enthusiasm for the program, help keep the retention rate of honors students at over 95 percent.
Donald Harward, director of honors program *K.M.*

University of Hartford, West Hartford, CT 06117

Freshman Dialogue—University of Hartford freshmen in the College of Arts and Sciences enroll in a one-credit course which combines orientation to the school with academic advising. Students meet the faculty adviser who will be leading their section of Freshman Dialogue during summer orientation. The Dialogue advisers introduce themselves to their groups, provide basic information about the university, and assist with scheduling and registration. During the first semester of their freshman year, students in each Dialogue section meet once a week with their adviser and seven other students. Freshman Dialogue was established to provide entering students with an opportunity to not only learn about the university but also to become better acquainted with a faculty member and other freshmen, says Howard Rosenblatt, associate dean. This is accomplished through group discussions on topics ranging from homesickness and extracurricular activities to campus housing and educational objectives. Dialogue classes also visit the library, museums, and downtown Hartford and often meet at a local pizza parlor or in the advisers' homes. Dialogue faculty receive a small entertainment budget. Rosenblatt notes that during fall 1981 freshmen will attend campus plays for free with their Dialogue adviser and classmates. By getting to know their Dialogue students on a personal basis, says Rosenblatt, advisers are able to closely monitor the students' academic progress. If students are having difficulties, the advisers can recommend tutors or the learning skills center as soon as the problems arise. The college also has a new system of mid-semester academic warnings which encourages faculty members in freshman-level courses to fill out warning notices during the eighth week of classes. Because students can drop courses until the tenth week, Dialogue advisers have a two-week period in which to help their students make a carefully considered decision. During the 1977–78 school year, 20 percent of the freshman class was placed on academic probation, says Rosenblatt. During the 1980–81 school year, the second year of the Dialogue program, the number of freshmen placed on probation dropped to eight percent. Rosenblatt is convinced that the course also will make a positive difference in retention. He notes that Dialogue advisers are enthusiastic about their involvement in the program. They attend information sessions on new programs, financial aid, and the changing trends in the work world. While Dialogue advisers assist their students in pre-registering for second semester classes, the freshmen are free to opt for an adviser in their major department after the first semester. Reports Rosenblatt: "The Dialogue advisers have a special relationship with their students. People return to their freshman adviser for advice." *P.B.*
Howard S. Rosenblatt, Associate Dean

Hollins College, Hollins College, VA 24020

Identity and Order—Beginning with the fall 1981 semester, Hollins College has initiated a year-long seminar for all freshmen. The college designed the seminar "to strengthen the liberal arts base on which students later build a major," according to William J. Evitts, coordinator of Freshman Seminars. Twenty-one faculty members volunteered to teach the seminar, titled Identity and Order, to groups of 14 students or less during the program's first semester. A planning committee of five seminar instructors wrote a course outline which was presented to and reshaped by the remaining seminar faculty. "We started talking and thinking about books," says Evitts. "We wanted good, readable books of enduring value which were accessible to freshmen. The book list came first and the theme second." The first semester reading list in the two-credit course includes Ibsen's *A Doll's House*, Mill's *On the Subjection of Women*, and Eiseley's *The Immense Journey*. The fall semester began with a showing of Frederick Wiseman's documentary film *High School*, which was followed by the assignment of Kingston's *The Woman Warrior*. As with all their reading assignments, students first wrote a response paper to Kingston's book and next handed in a directed study on an assigned topic. While the instructors respond to the two papers written on each reading assignment, they do not grade these weekly pieces. "This gives the students less fear and more pleasure in the writing process," says Evitts. "They are beginning to see our point that writing is not an anxious exercise across a minefield of grammar, but rather a form of thinking linked to communication." Seminar students read their papers aloud and learn how to communicate and to argue, says Evitts. At the end of the semester, the students will choose three of their papers to rewrite for grading. Evitts notes that because the seminar is a half course, students either add it to a full semester's course load or take another half course, such as chorus or dance, which gives them a full course load. According to Evitts, both student and faculty reaction to the seminar have ranged from satisfied to delighted. One goal of the program has already been realized. "Freshmen are talking to each other outside of class about a common educational experience," says Evitts. "At the freshman level students are mostly in large introductory classes. Now they have a great seminar experience." Evitts, who is also assistant to the president and associate professor of history, believes the seminar will achieve its other goals. "If it can, then the freshmen will be united by a common academic experience; will have strengthened their basic skills in writing, talking, and thinking analytically; and will have been introduced to some invigorating ideas through good books and good ideas." *P.B.*
William J. Evitts, coordinator of freshman seminars

Jefferson Community College, Louisville, KY 40272

Freshman Orientation Course—As part of a college-wide effort to increase student retention, Jefferson Community College's counseling staff offers an eight week, one-credit freshman orientation course for students who score below average on the college's standardized placement tests and writing sample. Each student who takes these placement tests receives a computer printout that designates which course sections he or she should take. Approximately 150 freshmen must enroll in one of the eight sections of the basic orientation course. The course aims to develop students' skill and confidence in making decisions and to help them clarify their goals and values. The first half of the course concentrates on "college survival." This part of the course covers student and faculty expectations of college, study skills, time management, and test-taking. To learn college survival techniques, students participate in group exercises and activities that build their trust in one another. According to Judith Rutledge, coordinator of the counseling program, a group approach helps students develop a support system among themselves that they can use in other courses. For example, Rutledge explains that after the first week of the orientation course, students as a group will reprimand a classmate who misses class or who is late. Another part of the course is the college scavenger

hunt, which, says Rutledge, provides an entertaining way for students to become familiar with their campus. To complete the hunt, students must collect articles such as a BEOG application from the financial aid office, information from the Records Office, and the name of the current exhibit at the campus art gallery. While the first half of the orientation course seeks to help students adjust to college, the second half asks them to clarify their values and set goals. During this half of the course, students use questionnaires and group discussions to determine their values and interests and to identify steps they can take to meet their goals. According to Rutledge, students enjoy the orientation course and wish it lasted all semester. Rutledge also believes the course could profitably continue after its 16 meetings. Consequently, she maintains informal weekly contact with former orientation students in order to help them with questions or difficulties which may arise. Usually these students do well, however. Rutledge is pleased that students who take the orientation course achieve a higher grade point average as a group than the college's other freshmen. They also maintain a retention rate of 91 percent. *K.M.*

Judith A. Rutledge, coordinator, Counseling Program

Marymount Manhattan College, New York, NY 10021

Freshman Seminar—During the first six weeks of the fall 1981 semester, Marymount Manhattan College supplemented its advisement seminar and skills workshops for first-year students with a pilot program called the Freshman Seminar. This new program aims to increase students' survival skills and their use of academic and student-support services, and to provide support groups for freshmen by offering them six weekly one-hour group sessions. The selection of participating freshmen depends only on a coordination of schedules, says Margaret Landry, director of advisement and retention. Although she would like to require the Freshman Seminar of all freshmen eventually, the new program is currently limited to freshmen whose schedules can accommodate it. Approximately 90 of the college's 200 freshmen attended the seminar program this year. Each session enrolled 12–15 students, whose group activities were led by a faculty or administrative facilitator and a volunteer student representative. These groups addressed a different topic each week. The first session, "Getting to Know You," used group activities such as paired introductions, whereby a group member introduces another member after a five-minute conversation, to help students get to know one another. Following this session came one called "Study Skills," in which participants completed a self-assessment questionnaire about their study habits, learned one specific method of studying textbooks, and performed a role-playing exercise which assigned a pair of students the roles of "study expert consultant" and "student needing instruction in study skills." The third session, "Time and Self Management," gave study tips to students after they completed a workshop on how they spend their time. The fourth session concentrated on improving students' communication between themselves and college administrators, while the fifth session used various worksheets to help students think about career and life planning and to inform them about the college's Career Development Center. In the last seminar, "Personal Development," students discussed their relationships with their parents, their teachers, and their peers, and were given a brief summary of common psychological conflicts experienced by first-year students. Although no formal evaluations of the seminar have been made yet, Landry believes that students enjoyed and benefited from the pilot program. In fact, some of the seminar groups plan to meet informally in order to continue the kinds of discussions they had in their first six sessions. Such group meetings are especially useful, Landry claims, in a school that enrolls as many commuting students as Marymount Manhattan does. *K.M.*

Sr. Margaret A. Landry, director of advisement and retention.

Thomas More College, Ft. Mitchell, KY 41017

Special Services Program—By helping approximately 75 financially, academically, or culturally disadvantaged local students, the Special Services Program (SSP) reflects Thomas More College's stated commitment to its diocesan community. The college deems certain students "disadvantaged" on the basis of federal Upward Bound and Talent Search program guidelines and scores from college math and writing placement tests, the Nelson-Denny Reading Test, SAT and ACT. Using funds from a 1980 grant from the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, the program administrators require students to meet with the program director six times during their freshman year to receive counseling about goals, self-images, study habits, and other problems often encountered by first-year college students. The counseling also helps SSP students decide which courses to take. SSP students may take four freshman-year courses designed to improve their basic skills. One such course, Math Skills, is offered on five different skill levels and is required of all college freshmen who receive low scores on the college math test. The other three courses, Study Skills, Reading Skills, and Basic Composition, are open only to SSP students. To supplement these classes, paid student tutors with good skills and faculty recommendations spend one hour a week with SSP students. Students receive elective credit but no general education or major credit for these basic skills courses. In addition to offering special courses, SSP pays for students' attendance at an average of five cultural events. SSP administrators also keep track of SSP students' grades, academic progress, and plans after graduation. To remain in the college, SSP students must achieve a 2.0 grade point average by the end of their fourth semester. Although students often complain about their work load during the first year, they are "pretty happy after completing the program," according to Darryl Mitchell, director of SSP. Since its establishment in 1978, the program has used its individual attention to students and close collaboration with the financial aid office to increase the retention rate of disadvantaged students by over 50 percent. *K.M.*

Darryl Mitchell, director, Special Services Program

Resources

In assisting with the compilation of the following resources, *Forum* essayist John Dwyer notes that "the paucity of resources on the freshman year may be a simple reflection of the inattention it receives from standard works. While we may not be surprised to find the word 'freshman' omitted from Dr. Johnson's *Dictionary*, we also will not find it in the single volume *The Encyclopedia of Education* (1970), the multi-volumed *Encyclopedia of Education* (1971), or the *International Encyclopedia of Higher Education* (1977). Even Frederick Rudolph, in *The American College and University* (1962) does not mention the freshman or the freshman year."

Archer, James. "A Freshman Development Project." *Journal of College Student Personnel* 17 (November 1976): 520.

Archer describes a University of Delaware project which used the Student Development Task Inventory (SDTI) of Prince, Miller, and Winston (1974). That inventory, in turn, was based on the work of Arthur W. Chickering, *Education and Identity* (1969). This project measured progress among freshmen in three areas: autonomy (independence from parents), mature interpersonal relationships (heterosexual, self-concept), and purpose (career, major).

Astin, Alexander W. *Four Critical Years*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1977.

Astin reports on the "pervasive influence" of college on students during the four-year period of the traditional curriculum. The impact is greatest upon the freshman, who, leaving home for the first time, is confronted with a variety of challenges to long-held beliefs, values, patterns of behavior, aspirations, and attitudes.

Astin, Alexander W. *Preventing Students From Dropping Out* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1975.

Astin's chapter on freshmen analyzes the factors contributing to attrition and persistence. "By far the greatest predictive factor is the student's past academic record and academic ability," he writes. Other factors are the student's degree plans at entrance, religious background, concern about college finances, study habits, and the educational attainment of parents.

Astin, Alexander W.; King, Margo R.; and Richardson, Gerald T. *The American Freshman: National Norms for the Fall of 1980*. Los Angeles: Cooperative Institutional Research Program, 1980.

This annual survey of American freshmen, sponsored by the American Council on Education and the Graduate School of Education at the University of California at Los Angeles, provides statistical data on freshmen in areas such as political orientation, family income, racial background, educational goals, high school grades, and religious beliefs. The data is organized by variables such as type and selectivity of institution, sex of freshmen, and geographic region.

Bayer, A.E.; Drew, D.E.; Astin, A.W.; Boruch, R.F.; and Creager, J.A. "The First Year of College: A Follow-up Normative Report." *ACE Research Reports*, vol. 5, no. 1. Washington, D.C.: American Council on Education, 1970.

This report presents a follow-up to information gathered by the American Council on Education and the original Cooperative Institutional Research Program on American freshmen in 1966–67. It summarizes previously-collected data on areas such as first-year performance and outcomes, educational goals, financial support, residence, self-ratings, and evaluation of college environment. It also provides the statistical results of the survey, "Norms for the First-year of College: 1966–67."

Biggs, Donald A.; Schomberg, Steven F.; and Brown, Joel. "Moral Judgment Development of Freshmen and their Pre-College Experiences," *Research in Higher Education* (April 1977): 329–339.

This study suggests that literary and artistic experiences may promote moral judgment development among freshmen. Though the researchers admit that they raised more questions than they answered, they do propose a freshman humanities course which might discuss moral issues related to certain literary and artistic experiences.

Brown, Peggy, ed. "Academic Advising." *The Forum for Liberal Education*. Washington, D.C.: Association of American Colleges, Vol. III, No. 4 (February 1981).

Articles in this issue of *Forum* examine how various institutions are strengthening their advising programs to help students attain liberal educations. Of special interest are the articles on Bowling Green State University's freshman course The University Seminar, the paraprofessional academic adviser program at Ocean County College, and Idaho State University's Retention Advising Program. Also included is an opening essay by Thomas Grites, director of academic advising at Stockton State University, on the responsibilities of advisers. Single copies of this issue are available for $2 from the *Forum* office.

Dewey, Deman III. "New Kid on the Block." *Journal of College Student Personnel* 21 (November 1980): 498–502.

This article describes a specialized group of college students—retirement age adults—whose needs the institution must respond to in a particular way. The creative approaches to programs for these students indicate the possibility of similar programs for the more traditional "new" students—the freshmen.

Dewey, Ronald G. "Differences Between Entering Freshmen from Different Size High Schools." *Journal of College Student Personnel* 19 (July 1978): 353–358.

Few academic differences were determined in this Kansas-based survey, but students from smaller schools were more involved in high school activities. The study raised the question of the needs of students from small high schools—do the types of social and interpersonal interaction which they experienced in high school exist on the college campus? Even if they do not exist, the student from the smaller school does not seem to have a lower academic performance or less persistence.

Flower, K.W. and Craft, W.J. "Computer Assisted Instruction Techniques for Screening Freshmen." *Engineering Education*, February 1981.

This article describes how North Carolina A&T State University computer programs that assist in mathematics courses cut down attrition rates and weed out more quickly the students who cannot adapt to the rigors of engineering coursework.

Gardner, John N. "Developing Faculty as Facilitators and Mentors." *New Directions for Student Services* 14 (1981): 67–80.

Gardner stresses the need for student affairs professionals and faculty members to join together in promoting student development. He employs University 101, the University of South Carolina at Columbia course featured in this issue of *Forum*, as a model for how this can be done. Gardner describes the faculty training workshop developed in conjunction with this freshman course and offers ten suggestions on how student personnel professionals can begin to involve faculty in student career development.

Harnett, David. "The Freshman Experience." *View* (alumni magazine of the University of San Francisco) III, iii, Summer–Fall 1981.

This is a commentary on the "Task Force on the Freshman Experience," the report and recommendations of a special committee appointed by Dean Harnett shortly after his arrival at the University of San Francisco in 1980. The quotation from the report which leads the article is telling: "College hits you like a brick wall."

Hart, Derrell and Keller, Michael J. "Self-Reported Reasons for Poor Academic Performance of First-Term Freshmen." *Journal of College Student Personnel* 21 (November 1980): 529–534.

This study shows that freshmen earning less than a C average in their first college semester identify their own lack of motivation, improper study habits, and inattention to school work as the most important contributing factors to their low achievement.

Heath, Douglas H. *Growing Up in College: Liberal Education and Maturity*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1968.

This study was based at the author's home campus, Haverford College. Heath notes that freshmen are forced by the college experience to question why they are learning. "The answer for many is a marked

deepening and stabilizing of their intellectual values," he writes. "They identify with the college's intellectual tradition and begin to enjoy 'learning for the sake of learning rather than for the sake of getting grades.'"

Lotkitz, Barbara D. and Sprandel, Hazel G. "The First Year: A Look at the Freshman Experience." *Journal of College Student Personnel* 17 (July 1976): 274–279.

The authors report on research conducted at Washington University, St. Louis, to determine freshman needs and concerns. Three kinds of data were collected: interviews, an attitude scale, and a questionnaire. Entering freshmen were found to be preoccupied with academic competence. In the second semester, social and community concerns appeared. One conclusion from the study is that faculty, advisers, student personnel staff, and resident advisers could be more effective in integrating the freshmen into the campus community by reaching out to them rather than simply responding to them.

Nichols, David L. *College Student Perceptions: Three-Year Follow-Up of 1973 Freshmen: A Study of Personal and Interpersonal Development*. Buffalo, NY: Student Testing and Research, State University of New York, 1980.

From his study, Nichols concludes that while interpersonal relationships seem to mature in college, certain personality characteristics seem to suffer. Juniors were found to be more pessimistic, less open to ideas, less enthusiastic and self-disciplined, and less able to cope with success, competition, and loneliness than they had as freshmen.

Pascarella, E.T. and Terenzini, P.T. "Patterns of Student-Faculty Informal Interaction Beyond the Classroom and Voluntary Freshman Attrition." *Journal of Higher Education* 48 (1977): 540–552.

This is a study of the potential contribution, which the authors feel to be unique, of the faculty member as an informal agent of socialization. They believe that the professor's role may be more important to the freshman than that of the student's peers, long thought to be the most powerful influence on student values, attitudes, and development. The outcomes of such faculty influence are discernible as early as the freshman year.

Pascarella, E.T. and Terenzini, P.T. "Evaluating Experimental Control Programs for Attrition-Persistence." *The Journal of Educational Research* 71 (March–April 1978): 234–237.

This study was conducted at the University of Nebraska at Omaha, a large, urban university. It shows that academic performance, as represented by the first-year grade point average, remains the major factor in attrition or persistence among freshmen.

Terenzini, P.T. and Pascarella, E.T. "Student-Faculty Relationships and Freshman Year Educational Outcomes: A Further Investigation." *Journal of College Student Personnel* 21 (November 1980): 521–528.

Empirical research shows that increased student-faculty contact has positive effects not only on the students' academic achievement. It also stimulates intellectual curiosity, refines interpersonal skills, and assists in clarifying personal and career goals.

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The Forum for Liberal Education is a topic-oriented publication featuring a subject of importance for liberal education in each issue. It does not endorse or evaluate institutional activity. Rather, it describes various ways in which institutions of higher learning address important common concerns. Upcoming issues of the *Forum* will look at life-long learning, values literacy, and graduate liberal studies. **The *Forum* staff is interested in receiving program information from our readers.** If your school is chosen for inclusion in an issue a staff member will interview a contact person at your school and write the article.

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